

**A Shot Heard 'Round the World:
A World that Works for Everyone**



Mark Rothko, Untitled, 1960, oil on canvas, 69" by 50", San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; acquired through a gift of Mrs. Peggy Guggenheim.

**"Context is the freedom to *be*... It has no form, no place in time;
it allows form and time."**

—Werner Erhard



This winter and spring, I had the privilege of personally being with 28,000 graduates and their friends, and of sharing this day on film with another 30,000 people. These thousands of people invested themselves as well as their time, money, intelligence and energy to work on—to come to grips with—what it takes for people to make a difference in the world.

Such an event is unprecedented. We live in a world in which a fundamental assumption is that it is futile for an individual to attempt to have an impact on the world. Clearly, people are now ready to express in commitment and in action their deepest desire to create a world that works for everyone.

This occasion is for me a shot heard 'round the world. More than merely expanding the space, the meetings were a breakthrough into a new space. This is complete. What will ensue is the struggle to manifest it. It is evident that you can deal with the slings and arrows, that you can take this context into life, that you've gotten the sense of your own power to determine the purpose and meaning in your own life, that you are in touch—in a way you'll never be able to deny—with your own power, the power to create a context of a world that works for everyone, a transformed world.

Thank you for having the courage, audacity, and heart to create as the context for your life that people—you—make a difference. It is my intention to serve you and to ensure that *est* as an organization serves you in expressing your commitment in the world.

Weiner

The Context for Creating a Transformed World: A World that Works for Everyone

A report on the impact of the recent events with Werner

by Mary Earle and Neal Rogin

It was the end of a turbulent and unpredictable decade—one that left many of us disillusioned about the past, troubled about the present, and uncertain about the future.

- Fifty Americans held hostage for months in their own embassy in Iran.
- An entire culture nearly annihilated in Cambodia.
- Soaring oil prices threatening the delicate balance of the world's economy.
- A widespread and deepening fear about our own personal economic futures: What will it take to heat our homes, drive our cars, feed our families, and maintain our way of life in the decade to come?

At a time when individuals feel powerless to affect the course of history, it almost seems a miracle that 60,000 people in 32 cities would come together to discover what it would take for each of us to retrieve our power to make our lives count.

Making the world work for everyone in times such as these would seem to require nothing short of a total planetary transformation, and the events were about just that.

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Thousands of people came together to participate with Werner Erhard in the birth of a context, to discover for themselves ways to take advantage of what was previously unthinkable: that we as individuals have the unique opportunity to make a difference in creating a world that works for everyone.

In the shadow of humanity's latest inhumanities, the idea that the world can work may seem naive and idealistic, yet at the events Werner, the graduates, and their friends shared a tough-minded and practical new vision of what is possible for humanity.

It is a vision of a world that works for all of us, with no one and nothing left out; a world in which the rules for living successfully are based on a principle of "you and me" rather than "you or me." It is a world where individuals experience their power and purpose, and where making a difference is not merely an idea, but a way of life.

"You are the beginning of something," Werner said at the start of the day. And if we were not yet aware of the impact of his words, none could deny their audacity. The purpose



CORE poster © 1965 Robert Rauschenberg

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of this event, he said, was nothing less than the transformation of human life—the recovering of our power to determine what our lives are really going to be about, instead of simply responding and reacting, even successfully, to the forces and circumstances of life.

A world that works. Making a difference. You and me. These three themes Werner wove through eight hours of an intense and impassioned presentation. It was a demanding day for the audience, yet the people present displayed rigorous attention and visible enthusiasm.

Werner's message was meant to "boggle" our minds, to challenge us to break out of our old, limiting paradigm, and to create an entirely new structure from which to discover the truth for ourselves. As we opened ourselves to encompass a radical new way of thinking, we were struck by doubts, arguments, and questions. The most prominent question was, "Well, what do I do?"

If we came for answers, we left without them; because this day, Werner emphasized, was not about being told what to do, but was about being empowered to think for ourselves and determine our own answers. We came away not with an agenda of things to do, but with the experience of a way to be in which the appropriate things to do would be revealed.

We left grappling with the questions posed by this new challenge, re-evaluating the basic premises of our lives, and engaged in discovering ourselves as big enough to take on this unique opportunity.

An honest look at the world as it is

Cheers and applause erupted spontaneously long before the event began, as people celebrated their joy in being together. It looked like a large family reunion, with friends hugging, waving to each other across the auditorium, entire groups standing to applaud other groups and greet newcomers. The atmosphere was buoyant, expectant.

When the presentation began, a different sort of mood settled over the gathering. It was a more sober, let's-get-down-to-work kind of atmosphere.

Thousands of people had come to find out about what had been described as an authentic opportunity to make the world work.

This day, Werner said, could transform our lives—again. But even more, if we were willing to create it, today could be the beginning of a real revolution, a transformation of life itself—it could

literally be a "shot heard 'round the world."

But before we could talk about the world as it could be, we needed to take a long, honest look at the world as it is.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow,
and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from
day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded
time;
And all our yesterdays have
lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out,
out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a
poor player
That struts and frets his hour
upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; It
is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound
and fury,
Signifying nothing.

William Shakespeare
Macbeth

"Our lives don't give us any indication that we make a difference, or that anything counts," Werner declared. "In fact, we live in a world in which no one and nothing seems ultimately to matter. It is a world that works for very few of us. Three-fourths of the people on this planet are miserable, and the other one-fourth have so much that they can prove that they're not, and are still miserable. In such a world, we are attempting to live meaningful and purposeful lives; yet we fail, because we attempt to do so in a condition in which we don't make any difference."

Werner delivered his message with a great deal of intention—loudly. It was slightly stunning to confront the undeniable facts of life so clearly, yet there they were. The implications began to sink in.

Indeed, has there been any indication that any of us ultimately have a real impact on the actual quality of life? Even after we put a human being on the moon, did a fundamental shift take place in the world? After the public wrenching of Watergate, even after President Nixon resigned, was anything really different in our lives? Do any events, major or minor, really alter our experience of being alive?

Sure, we make progress, and some things actually improve, Werner noted, but our progress and improvement occur "in the space that's left to us after we have given up the idea of ever making a difference."

"I wish I could take you back to your childhood, when you had dreams, when

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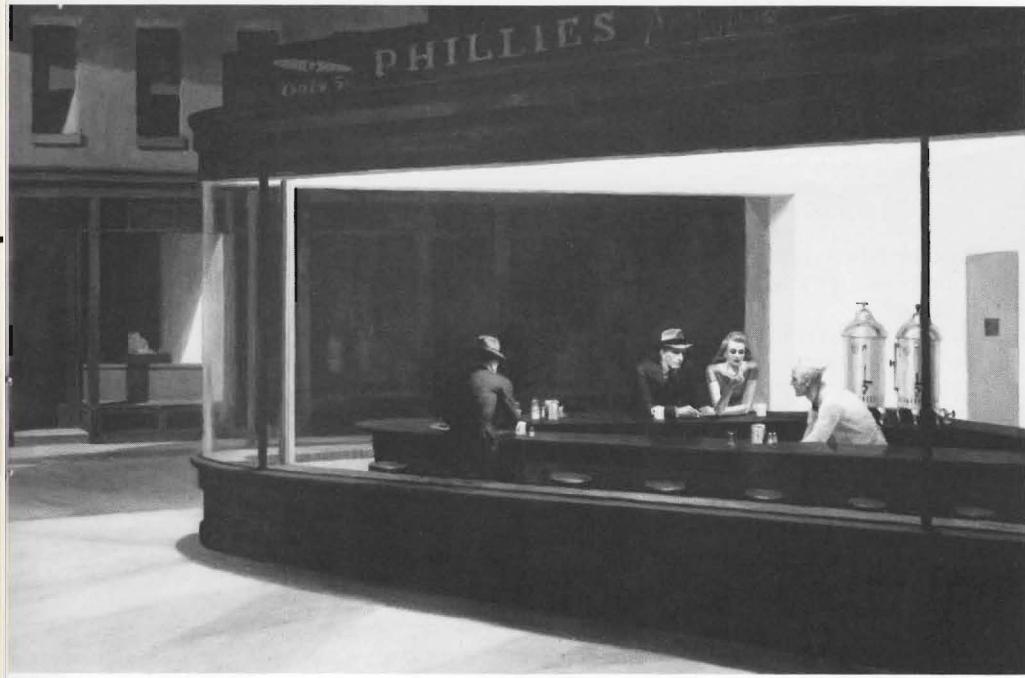
you had visions. I wish I could move us all back to that experience in childhood when we gave up, when we learned not to care so much. In a world in which we learn that we don't count, we begin to buy into the agreed upon values; we try to accumulate money, power, status. 'If my life doesn't matter, then maybe what life is about is making myself comfortable or successful.' We organize our lives to hide that we don't have any impact, at the same time trying to prove that we do. We participate in an unwitting conspiracy, trafficking in titillating inconsequential, so that we don't have to admit to each other that nothing really makes any difference."

And so it goes. Day after day after day, moving, we are told by many, toward apocalypse, the abrupt and final destruction of everything, *doomsday*. But Werner warned of a danger even greater than doomsday: "I see a more probable outcome, one which will be much worse than the end of the world. It is more likely that we will continue on the way we have been, creeping in this petty pace."

If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.

Chinese Proverb

This day, Werner said, was about determining for ourselves, *intentionally*, what our lives are about—creating a new beginning for the rest of our lives. But before we could arrive at the beginning, we needed to start by looking at where we are, by examining the unconscious



Edward Hopper, Nighthawks, Collection of The Art Institute of Chicago

premises upon which we have based our lives so far.

The fundamental life principle

Werner reported that one of the most important discoveries that had come out of his research over the last 18 months was the recognition of the existence within each of us of a fundamental life principle. Each of our lives, he said, is shaped by a basic principle which we adopt when we are young, and which thereafter determines the scope and boundaries of our lives. This fundamental principle is not *what* we think or feel; rather, it sets the limits of our thinking and feeling. It shapes our personality, our reactions, and our expression of ourselves. It is the lens through which we unwittingly look at every aspect of our lives; it is the box we live in.

This basic decision, probably formed out of an incident in our childhood, may be something as simple as "you must get the approval of others," whereupon our entire life is shaped by, seen through the lens of, lived in the box of trying to get other people to approve of us at all costs. It doesn't matter that the price we pay is our own integrity and selfhood.

Other examples of the basic principle that Werner discussed include "be careful," "you've got to win," "always play it safe," "you've got to be right," "be nice," "don't make a fool of yourself," "you've got to make it on your own," or "don't let anyone think you've been conned."

Until we become aware of our fundamental life principle, recognize that

we are at the effect of it, and take responsibility for it, we cannot transcend it and determine for ourselves, consciously and intentionally, a new direction and purpose for our lives. If we merely extend ourselves from the past, from what we already understand, there is no transformation, only more of the same. Thus, life continues in this "petty pace."

For a transformation to take place, we must break out of our old paradigm and create an entirely new one. We must think in a new way, using what Werner called "the highest function of our intellect"—the ability to create a context.

The power of context

Ideas are themselves substantive entities with the power to influence and even transform life. In effect, ideas are not unlike food, vitamins, or vaccines. They invoke inherent potential for growth and development and can affect the course of evolution.

Dr. Jonas Salk

Having identified the condition in which we live, and having been made painfully aware of the futility of trying to manipulate our circumstances in an environment in which we are at the effect of forces outside ourselves as well as unexamined assumptions within ourselves, we had arrived at the beginning.

Now Werner spoke with passion about the power of context to transform life.

"Context is the freedom to *be*. Context is space. It has no form, no place in time; it allows form and time. In the absence of a consciously-created context, our lives are controlled by the *content*—the forces and circumstances of the condition in which we live. Once you create a context, that context then generates a process in which the content—the forces and circumstances—re-order and align themselves with the context. For example, if you choose to shift the context of your life from 'I don't matter' to 'I make a difference,' the circumstances in your life, while they may not have changed, take on an entirely new meaning. This new meaning, then, begins to change the circumstances themselves. Soon the situations in your life begin to reflect that you *do* make a difference."

Consciously creating a context allows us to determine intentionally a new fundamental principle for our lives. The fundamental life principle we adopted in childhood is reactive, unconscious, defensive, immature, and boxes us in to predetermined patterns of behavior. Principles, by their nature, suggest shapes for things, and are one step down from context. The contrast between principle and context is the contrast between shaping and freedom. Context gives no shape; it merely allows shape. The creation of a context allows us to create an intentional life purpose, one that gives us freedom and true power.

The source of context is the Self. It comes into being when an individual creates it within herself or himself. It comes alive when each of us says *so be it*.

"A context is literally created by creating it. You just need to recognize that you have the power of context, and then you simply need to be willing to be responsible for creating it yourself, without reason, without the props of evidence—to simply say 'this shall be.' I have the power of my word in my own universe. I have the power to determine the context of my own life. I give meaning to my life. The meaning doesn't come from outside. In my universe, it shall be that life can work for everyone.

"That you make a difference, that the rules for living successfully are now these based on you *and* me, that we can live in a context of the world working for everyone, is literally *unthinkable*. It is beyond our present paradigm, outside the scope and limits of the condition in which we have lived. You have to dare to think the unthinkable, dare to do more than merely dream, dare to be responsible for—to be the creator of—your own world."

Creating a context

The context which Werner is proposing is utterly new, not evolved from the

process which preceded it. It is not "more, different, or better" than what went before. It is not merely a rearranging of the circumstances; it is a transformation, an entirely new way of living.

Can life be transformed? Can the world actually support and nurture everyone? Clearly, our history will give us little, if any, agreement for such a notion. Our history reflects the old paradigm of *you or me*. In such a condition, to think that the world can work is considered idealistic, to say the least; to think it can work for *all of us* is completely naive; to consider that individuals make any difference is to be deluded.

It is obvious, then, that to create this new context, one must, as Werner said, "be a radical being, willing to stand on your own, willing to think for yourself. You can't prove that the world can work or that you make a difference. There is no proof; there are only results. It takes great courage to be committed to producing results without proof, without credit."

This new context, then, represents something much more radical than a revolution. The nature of revolution has been to destroy and dismantle. It is directed against something which it is attempting to replace. Transformation, however, does not negate what has gone before it; rather, it fulfills it. Creating the context of a world that works for everyone is not just another step forward in human history; it is the step which will allow humanity and history to be fulfilled. It is the context out of which our history will begin to make sense. The transformation reaches back into the apparent senselessness and cacophony of history and gives it meaning and dignity which then guides and directs us in the future.

What does the transformation look like?

Again, the question arises: What kind of world might be generated out of the context that each of us makes a difference? In the second half of the day, Werner introduced the idea of a *you and me* world, where winning the game of life no longer means getting ahead at the expense of others.

"Sometime around now—it may have happened five years ago or fifty years ago—but sometime around now, the rules for living successfully on this planet shifted. We can no longer hope to live meaningful, purposeful lives using the rules of a *you or me* world. It's becoming clearer and clearer to those who will look that in order to live successfully on this planet, we must discover and live by the rules of *you and me*."

Clearly, the competition, the manipulation, the hostility, and the struggle for

survival that has characterized our *you or me* world is replaced in a *you and me* world by cooperation, compassion, harmony, and love.

"We are not speaking of altruism," Werner said. "In a *you and me* world, when you are successful, whole, validated, and fulfilled, I win. What is the meaning of concepts such as selfishness and altruism when you experience the Self as all things—as the space in which all things occur?"

In the past, we have maintained a *you or me* world by sharing our surplus rather than sharing the ability to produce surplus. That kind of altruism, those "gestures of good will" have only served to strengthen the status quo and perpetuate a world of "haves" and "have-nots." In a *you and me* world, true generosity means empowering people to produce for themselves.

Thus we need an entirely new way of thinking, an utterly different set of rules for living. Furthermore, we need to get back in touch with our own nobility, humility, courage, and compassion—qualities which seem archaic to us today, which we are more likely to find in our legends and fairy tales than in our daily lives.

In discussing the qualities needed for a *you and me* world, Werner pointed out that what is missing most in people's lives is a sense of **nobility**—not merely a sense of purpose, but as George Bernard Shaw described it, "a purpose recognized by ourselves as a mighty one." Being noble persons possessing a noble purpose is no longer the exclusive domain of a few extraordinary individuals; rather it is a choice that is available to everyone.

To live nobly, to determine for ourselves that our lives have purpose and meaning, can only be accomplished with the quality of **humility**. By humility Werner did not mean a kind of "churchmousey." It's tough, he said, to give up our idea of humility as being shy and retiring and to recognize that it takes real humility to be bold without being arrogant, to intrude when intruding is embarrassing. To be truly humble when you are attacked is not just to refrain from striking back, but to reconstruct the situation so that the person attacking can win by your winning.

It takes true humility to give up figuring out what is merely possible, what *can* be done, and to stretch to see what needs to be done. The arrogant remain safe within the scope of what they figure they can succeed at; only the humble are willing to risk failure, to think the unthinkable, to do the impossible.

True humility is derived from the recognition of the value and validity of each one of us, and from **compassion**, a deep sensitivity to the plight of all people. Compassion is not sympathy. Sympathy asks nothing from people. True compassion knows that no one is small, weak,

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or insignificant. If you are truly compassionate, you are willing to ask people to stretch to be even more, knowing full well the heart, commitment, and self-discipline that it takes for them to expand.

Compassion recognizes the plight not only of people who are in poor and desperate circumstances; it also recognizes the emptiness that can lie behind the comfortable circumstances of people who are successful.

Werner spoke of the enormous **courage** it takes to approach living from a *you and me* context. It is audacious to create your life making a difference in a world that says that you don't. It takes a lot of **heart**—openness to your own magnanimity, compassion for yourself, for your own pettiness when it shows itself. Even in the face of failure, Werner noted, "you need to be willing to accept yourself as an evolving master in the issue of making the world work for everyone, and to hold the failures, doubts, fears, and uncertainties within the context that you are evolving in mastery."



This sumi-e circle is derived from the Sanskrit word "sunyata" and means "emptiness" or "nothingness" in Zen Buddhism. It was created by Zen master and calligrapher Yamada Mumon Roshi.

A key to mastery, Werner emphasized throughout the day, lies in the willingness to risk failure. In a you *and* me world, every failure, every obstacle, is the opportunity for a breakthrough. Transforming failure into breakthrough is perhaps the basic principle in a new set of principles, for it enlivens failure and inadequacy so that they contribute to the whole.

Operating principles for a you and me world

Since we have been raised and educated in a you *or* me world, and since very few of us have noticed the shift to you *and* me, we are going to have to work out the rules for living on our own. We won't get much help. Werner did share his own perceptions of some of the other new rules, or operating principles, for the you *and* me context:

1. Respect the other person's point of view, whether or not you agree with it. Recognize that if you had their history, their circumstances, and the forces that play on them, you would likely have their point of view.
2. Consider life a privilege—all of it, even the parts that are difficult or seem a waste of time.
3. Give up the islands that reinforce mediocrity, the safe places where we gossip and complain to one another, where we are petty.
4. Take a chance. Be willing to put your reputation on the line; have something at stake.
5. Work for satisfaction rather than for credit.
6. Keep your word. There will be times when the circumstances of life will make you forget who you are and what you're about. That is when you need to be committed to keeping your

word, making what you say count.

Werner spoke at length about a primary operating principle of you *and* me which he called "trimtabbing"—the ability to use skillful means, to apply whatever effort is available to achieve results far greater than you could expect that much effort to produce. Buckminster Fuller coined this term from the small trimtab which turns a huge rudder on large ocean-going ships; he uses it to show how a "little individual" can change the course of the mighty ship of state.

Trimtabbing implies using the principle of leverage, enhancing individual effectiveness by applying one's energy in such a way that it will produce the greatest results. People become "trimtabs" when their lives are oriented beyond their personal desires to supplying what is wanted and needed. They shift their sense of self from the thing which they are to the space in which life is. Discovering and providing what is wanted and needed, Werner said, is the key to living successfully in a you *and* me world.

Forget about likes and dislikes. They are of no consequence. Just do what must be done. This may not be happiness, but it is greatness.

George Bernard Shaw

Finding out what's wanted and needed

For a discussion of questions arising from his presentation, Werner was joined by *est* trainer Stewart Esposito and by Bill Clements, who has worked closely with Werner for several years. When Bill and Stewart asked what actions are appropriate to a *you and me* world, Werner was adamant that there are no pat answers, no prescribed actions in the new context.

He pointed out that, usually, unless people have been given a plan, something new to do, something concrete to rally around, they think they haven't been told

anything important. He deliberately refused to give a laundry list of things to do. The answers, he said, must be arrived at by thinking for yourself.

"Once you live in the context of *you and me*," Werner said, "it is incumbent upon you to determine what's wanted and needed. Determine it yourself and then provide it."

Sounds simple. Yet finding out what's wanted and needed can often be more difficult than producing it. There are no classes in universities where you can go to find out what's wanted and needed. In a *you and me* world, life becomes the university for discovering the answers for yourself.

Seeing what's wanted and needed requires a special kind of observation. Like the Zen master who, looking at a cup, sees not only the cup but also the space in the cup, the person who sees what is wanted and needed must be able to see what isn't there. What is missing? What, if provided, would complete it?

"Go home and see what's wanted and needed in the lives of the people you live with," Werner said. "Go back and look to see what's wanted and needed at work

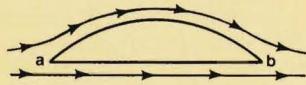
and in the lives of the people you work with. The biggest difference you can make is to enable other people to discover that they make a difference."

Fundamentally, providing what's wanted and needed means empowering other people. In Zen, it is said that a true master is known not by the number of his disciples, but by whether his disciples become masters themselves. To empower others is to enable them to discover their ability to master life for themselves. True empowerment is not just sharing the fruits of our success, but sharing the ability to succeed.

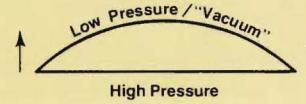
"You know the person you came with?" Werner continued. "Start with them. Find out what's wanted and needed, what you can do to support them in making a difference. To contribute to the quality of any human being's life is to provide them with the opportunity to discover that who they are matters, and they, too, can contribute to the quality of people's lives. Once it begins to work, it doesn't require additional energy. It is self-generating. If you will make it your responsibility to make a difference in life, and support others in the experience that they make a

The Principle of the Trimtab

Buckminster Fuller explains that the principle of a trimtab comes from the fundamental principle of a wing-foil:

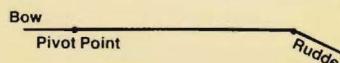
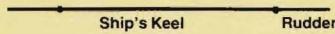


Air traveling over the top curved surface from (a) to (b) must go farther and thus is "stretched thinner" than air going across the bottom flat surface. It therefore creates a lower pressure area on top and sucks the foil into the partial vacuum. This partial vacuum is known as "lift."

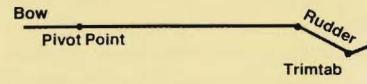


Contrary to popular belief, an airplane is primarily sucked upward rather than pushed (75% lift, 25% push up).

The principle also applies to the functioning of a ship's rudder:



Putting the rudder over lengthens one surface, as with the wing-foil. Low pressure thus creates suction at the stern of the boat around the pivot point.



Turning the trimtab (a tiny rudder on the trailing edge of the main rudder) causes a small low-pressure area to be formed, which creates an initial momentum allowing the main rudder to turn with less effort in turning the whole ship around.

Buckminster Fuller says, "When I thought about steering the course of spaceship earth and all of humanity, I saw most people trying to turn the boat by pushing the bow around.

"I saw that by being all the way at the tail of the ship, by just kicking my foot to one side or the other, I could create the 'low pressure' which would turn the whole ship. If ever someone wanted to write my epitaph, I would want it to say 'Call me Trimtab.' "

Origins

The material in "A World that Works for Everyone" comes directly from my experience of the thousands of people who have allowed me to share so profoundly and intimately in their lives—from really being with people and from that, being able to see what we are truly about. This includes people with whom I have met, interacted, and worked; it includes the people who have taken the *est* training; also the people I have talked to and worked with on The Hunger Project; and it includes the people who supported and contributed to the work and research of Breakthrough Racing.

There is no way to name all these individuals who have allowed me to learn from them. I can perhaps acknowledge everyone, however, by specifically mentioning one we all know: Buckminster Fuller. While not wishing to imply an endorsement by Bucky, or even that my use of the explanation of trimtabbing precisely represents his work, I do want to acknowledge his great contribution: to me personally, to all people, and to a world that works for everyone.

—Werner

difference, that's a chain reaction which expands geometrically."

Fears, doubts, and questions

Clearly, creating a *you and me* context in a world educated for *you or me* generates resistance and "yeah buts." As we grapple with discovering what is wanted and needed, we may also find ourselves confronting our doubts, fears, arguments, and questions. During and after the event, the spectrum of reaction to what Werner was saying ranged from "*It can't be done*" to "*Tell me what to do.*"

"This is great what's happening here, but 10,000 people—even 100,000 people—can't really make any difference in the world. The job is just too big."

"The whole thing is too abstract. What proof is there that the world can work? He didn't prove it to me. He's talking about naive idealism; this is just a big revival meeting."

"It can never happen because _____." (Insert "politicians are too corrupt," or "people are inherently greedy," or any one of a thousand other reasons why not.)

"I get the idea, but I don't know how to do it. How do you create a context? How do you know if you're making a difference? How do you decide what's wanted and needed?"

"It sounds great, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to sacrifice a lot to live this way. What do I have to give up?"

"Why doesn't he tell us what to do?"

As the event came to a close, it was apparent that we would take our doubts and questions home with us, that they would catalyze the process of discovery.

"This is not something you're supposed to have wrapped up in some nice, neat package—that's no adventure!" Werner emphasized. "Adventure is something that keeps you a little uncomfortable and off-balance. Don't try to get rid of the discomfort. That is not the intention of this presentation—that you walk out with a pat hand to play. No! the intention is that you walk out empowered to resolve the questions of what you are going to do with your life—of what your life is really going to be about."

If there was one thing we were left with, then, it was that we would have to think for ourselves, generate our own answers, and trust who we are. As Stewart Esposito put it, speaking carefully, "I have a deep sense of certainty that I haven't figured out what to do tomorrow, but that I will recognize what to do out of my intention to do what's wanted and needed. It's now time to bring this out into the world. It's now time to get to work. It has never been as clear to me as it is now that the job is enormous and that the Self that's here is bigger than the job to be done. It is truly thrilling."

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

Helen Keller

It had been a long and, at times, arduous day; yet the keen attention and intention of the thousands of participants indicated their deep commitment to coming to grips with what it takes to make a difference in the world.

This day wasn't about getting the answers. Instead, we would have to stick our necks out, take risks, attempt the impossible, and above all, allow ourselves to make mistakes.

"I have the sense that some people are struggling to get this right," Werner said. "You aren't going to get it right. We are infants at creating context, and infants don't get it right. You have it wrong to start with, and it's only out of having it wrong that we come to know it and to master it. I know that a world that works for everyone is going to be born out of the mistakes and errors we've made in producing a world that works for very, very few of us. I know that it will be built on the ashes and bones of our mistakes. They form the foundation for what comes afterwards. And I know that it won't happen without people's courage to stick their necks out, to be boldly naive, to take a chance, to risk failure. We've got to see that every failure is an opportunity for breakthrough—not some crummy little evolution. A breakthrough! Not some little 'day-by-day-creeps-in-this-petty-pace,' but a real breakthrough!"

"It's a game we can't lose!" Werner declared, still exuberant after eight hours of talking. "Step out! Swing out! Take a chance! Get on with it!"

People jumped to their feet, cheering and applauding. Such a response after an intense and demanding day was a clear indication that they were ready for this daring adventure.

"Every human being's deepest, most natural expression is the desire to make a difference in life, of wanting to matter. This opportunity is not limited to the individual; we can recognize ourselves at the level of relationship, community, organization, and society, and have each of these expressions of ourselves make a difference in life.

"We can choose to make the success of all humanity our personal business. We can choose to be audacious enough to take responsibility for the entire human family. We can choose to make our love for each other and for the world what our lives are really about."

Except for the clapping and cheering, the beginning of this revolution—this "shot heard 'round the world"—was a

quiet one. The creation of a context is a silent, solitary, and personal act. It makes no noise, yet it resounds through the universe. Life shifts, and a whole new array of options, opportunities, and outcomes are revealed—if we but look to see them. If we look through the lens of "I make a difference," we see a whole world of difference to be made.

Humanity is at a point of choice. The rules for living successfully on the earth are shifting. No longer can we pretend that we are not deeply and profoundly connected to everyone and everything. There is only one humanity, and we are it. Millions of people are realizing that we are emerging into a *you and me* world. Whatever each of us does makes a difference to all of us.

Sometime around now, each one of us has the opportunity to make a choice about what life is really going to be about. Is it going to be about making it—or making it work? Are we going to continue to keep our visions and dreams to ourselves—or are we going to bring them to life? Are we going to be buried with our potential still intact, with our gift undelivered—or will we seize the opportunity to live life as if we make all the difference?

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

George Bernard Shaw

For many people, life seems to be a kind of brief candle—hardly worth living. But for those who are bold, who are venturesome, who have the humility to deal with what is possible rather than what is predictable, life is an exciting and challenging adventure. Life is no brief candle to me. In a world that can work for everyone, especially in which I can make a difference—that is a life worth living! That is living! That is being alive!

Werner Erhard

Now What?

Discovering What You Can Do with the Difference You Make

Now what? What does it take to make a difference in a world that says you don't? As you leave this event, you may find yourself excited and elated, anticipating a new way of being in the world, only to find in a few days that your "you and me" enthusiasm is dampened by the hard realities of a "you or me" world. What seemed like an opportunity may soon feel like a burden. The energy and support of the people you participated with in the event may seem inaccessible to you. You're on your own again...what can one lone individual do?

Nobody said it was going to be easy

Before you allow any invalidation to creep in, remember that what we are about here is entirely new. *No one* knows what it will take to create a world that works for everyone—no one has a blueprint for action—and no one said it was going to be easy. Similarly, no one can tell you what to do. You are the one who will create what's next. You are the only person who can make real for yourself that you make a difference. Only you have the power at all times and under all circumstances to give meaning and purpose to your life.

Creating the context that your life makes a difference—that you have the power to create a *you and me* world, a world that works for everyone—is an action that requires daily attention. You may find that each day, in various situations, you will need to create that experience newly for yourself, to reevaluate habitual attitudes and actions learned in the condition of "you or me." Each time you look newly at a situation—to discover what's really wanted or needed, to find how everybody can win, to see how you can empower

other people—you are generating the new context.

Empowering others

The biggest difference you can make is to empower others to make a difference. To empower means to give power or ability to, to enable. It can seem foolish and sometimes even threatening to give power to others. Certainly it is difficult. Can you trust them? What if they make mistakes, make the wrong decisions, or don't support you in return?

Empowering others demands courage, creativity, and above all letting go of an attachment to being right. Enabling others is a function of your willingness to have everyone succeed and of your trust that, fundamentally, each of us wants to make a difference. Sometimes it may mean working behind the scenes, working without recognition or credit, or giving up your own position in order to make the whole work. Setting an example of workability is the most empowering action of all.

You can empower others and at the same time expand the creation of the context by spreading the word—getting out the message of this event. Each day, in a myriad of situations, there are opportunities to let others know that the world *can* work, that in fact we are emerging into a new era for humanity, and that each of us really does matter in bringing about the transformation.

What can you do?

As for specific actions that make a difference, you will need to discover those

within your own realm of activity according to your own talents, skills, and inclinations. Each of us has special gifts, a unique contribution to make. The action need not be big or dramatic or far-reaching to make a difference. A simple comment can shift a context; a small deed can turn a situation around. Discovering what's really wanted and needed (including what you yourself really want and need) is a challenge requiring vision and sensitivity. To be sure, you will make mistakes, head down the wrong tunnel only to discover (at the other end) that something entirely different was really required. Almost certainly there will be failures and setbacks, which are always an opportunity for breakthrough. Persistence is necessary; perseverance furthers.

Discovering your own answers

In answering the question "What can I do with the difference I make?" it is important to remember that no one knows the answer but you. You have the ability to do your own thinking, to find your own answers. A good place to begin might be to refresh yourself on some of the principles of operating in a *you and me* world that are listed in this booklet, especially such things as trimtabbing, and how to discover and supply what's wanted and needed. In addition, here are some questions to guide you in the process of your own personal discovery:

- What am I already doing that is having an impact? How can I strengthen and expand the opportunities I have to make a difference through my work?

"While no one wants to be the first to say it, who each of us is and the fundamental choices each of us makes in life seem to matter very little.

"Even acts of great courage and intelligence, while admirable and even inspiring, exist in sharp contrast to the apparent unworkability of the world at large. Our greatest technical achievement, walking on the moon, while galvanizing the world for a moment, did not fundamentally alter people's experience of their ability to make a difference in their lives and in the world.

"Sometime around now—it may have happened five years ago or 50 years ago—but sometime around now, the rules for living successfully on earth shifted, and an opportunity, unseen before, began to reveal itself.

"This opportunity is a context—a particular space or paradigm, a way of being—which unexpectedly creates the possibility for a person's life to truly make a difference.

"In this context, the way each of us answers the question, 'What is my life really going to be about?' can literally alter the course of humanity.

"The possibility to create the context in which people's lives really matter is undoubtedly the most profound opportunity available to anyone, ever."

– Werner Erhard